

Fort Des Moines Historic Complex,
Buildings 59 and 60
(Double Barracks)
Des Moines
Polk County
Iowa

HABS No. IA-121-H

HABS
IDWA,
77-DESMO,
24-H-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Rocky Mountain Regional Office
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225

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77-DES MO,
24-H-

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Building Nos. 59-60. Double Barracks

This structure stands along the south side of the parade next to Building No. 58. Completed on November 15, 1904, the 200-man double barracks cost \$58,551.73 to erect and was built of red brick joined in running bond with red-pigmented mortar and resting on a limestone foundation. The roof was of slate. Raised according to standard plan 75G in the office of the Quartermaster General, the structure consists of a main building measuring 71 feet 8 inches by 39 feet 4 inches, plus two wings, each 39 feet 4 inches by 103 feet 4 inches.

The main building, as in the other structures raised on the same plan, connects the wings. On its front there once stood a two-tiered roofed porch with metal railings and turned wood columns. Doorways stood near the wings on both levels and numbered four, all with panels and transoms. Two banks of steps led from the ground to the lower porch. Six double hung windows, each with four lights, were on the front of each level. In the rear of the main building was another two-tiered porch and the same window arrangement existed on the back wall, although two more doors were added at the first floor level. The double porch was continued on the front of the wings as they adjoined the main building, but the roofed porches at the rear of the wings existed on the lower level only. On the exterior sides of the wings there are seventeen windows, all double hung, with nine at the upper level and eight at the lower level. A door leading down to the basement is also located on the exterior side, along with five basement windows and two coal chutes. The courtyard interior sides of the wings each have ten double hung windows, five at each level, while five basement windows are at ground level. Windows throughout the building have segmental arches and limestone lug sills. The roof of the main building is ridged and has six corbeled chimneys. The roofs of the wings are gabled; each had a single chimney and two ventilators. At the front and rear of each wing,

on the gables, were two double hung attic windows. Those in front were palladian of six lights apiece, those in the rear were of four lights each. A firewall halves the structure.

The interior floor space of Building Nos. 59-60, above the basement, comprises 13,440 square feet. Including the basements, each of the barracks was originally arranged thusly:

Basement:

Cellar, 33' 1" x 36' 3" (including store room and coal bin)
Lavatory, 32' 9" x 36' 3"
Boiler room, 32' 9" x 36' 3" (including coal bin)
Hall, 11' 7" x 36'
Cellar, 23' 6" x 36'

First floor:

Mess room, 33' 1" x 36' 10"
Dormitory, 33' 2" x 38' 6"
Hall and Vestibule, 11' 7" x 36' 8"
Sergeant's room, 11' 7" x 16' 4"
Store room, 8' 4" x 11' 6"
Tailor shop, 11' 10" x 11' 6"
Company office, 11' 7" x 19' 10"
NCO room, 11' 6" x 15' 4"
Cook's room, 10' 7" x 11' 10"
Pantry, 10' 7" x 11' 10"
Kitchen, 22' 3" x 36' 10"

Second floor:

Dormitory, 36' 10" x 100' 10"
Hall, 11' 7" x 16' 4"
Barber shop, 11' 6" x 16' 4"
NCO room, 11' 7" x 16' 4"
Day room, 10' 10" x 36'

Attic:

Room, 36' 10" x 100' 10"
Room, 36' 8" x 37'

The interior of the double barracks now closely approximates those previously discussed. The basements contain scored concrete floors and cinder block walls enclosing the boiler rooms. Masonite ceilings and partitions have been added, the latter apparently to divide the space for classroom use. The stairs leading to the first level have molded linoleum tread and the rail has turned balusters and boxed post with panels. The dormitory rooms of the first level have been converted to office rooms or otherwise partitioned, and fluorescent lighting has been added. The stairway leading to the second level has a balustered rail. In Building 59 the dormitory rooms remain largely intact as originally built, although a partition has been installed near the front and classrooms are present. In Building 60 a partition separates the front dormitory from other rooms. The south side of the dormitory has a small dais and a movie screen installed, while the north wall partition shows evidence of a projection booth once having been there. The attics of both buildings have numerous small storage closets built of tongue and groove lumber. Trusses and framing are of heavy timbers. Throughout the upper levels of the buildings the walls are of plaster and the floors of wood.

In 1918-19 the double barracks was utilized as Wards 8 and 7 of the General Hospital. The building had electricity and was steam heated using radiators. The barracks contained twelve toilets, twenty-six wash basins, six bath tubs (later removed), and four showers. Between the time of its construction and 1922 average repair costs on the barracks amounted to \$178.20 per year. In 1927 and 1928 one hot water heater was replaced and two kitchen ranges installed in the structure. Also in 1927 the back porch of Building No. 59 was rebuilt, the copper gutters, downspouts, and roof repaired, and the work painted for \$446.32. Similar work accomplished for Building No. 60 cost \$437.41. In 1929 Moulstone flooring was installed in both kitchens. Major unspecified repairs in October, 1930, cost \$1979, while in 1931 the fire walls were extended, insulation placed around the chimney, and wiring changed in the attics, work costing \$538.80. In 1937 lavatories, showers, and toilets were installed in the basements and heaters placed in the attics of both

units. As of early 1987, Building Nos. 59-60 was vacant, with all porches, save those on the rear of the wings, entirely gone. The structure was deteriorating, with the exterior and roof in particularly poor condition. (22)

22. Card for Building Nos. 59-60. "Historical Record of Buildings." NA, RG 77, Box 51. Plan, "Two Co. Barrack," No. 75G, April, 1902. 9 sheets. NA, RG 77. Cartographic Archives Division; Field survey notes, February 20-22, 1987.